

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5741

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

USUN NEW YORK 337

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 3348

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SN ASEAN, ID

SUBJECT: FURTHER IMPRESSIONS FROM ASEAN FOREIGN
MINISTERS MEETING

REFS: (A) SINGAPORE 3232; (B) MANILA 9424

1. IN RECENT MEETING WITH DCM, DEPUTY SECRETARY, MFA,
TAN BOON SENG GENERALLY SUPPORTED THE ACCOUNTS OF THE
ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING AS REPORTED BY EMBASSY
MANILA (REF B). HE CAME UP WITH FOLLOWING
ADDITIONAL IMPRESSIONS OF THE DISCUSSION OF THE TIMOR
ISSUE AND THE QUESTION OF THE MAINTENANCE OF A BIG POWER
PRESENCE IN THE ASEAN REGION.

2. TIMOR. TAN SAID INDONESIA HAD WANTED THE ASEAN FOREIGN
MINISTERS TO ENDORSE INDONESIAN ACTIONS IN TIMOR.
DURING THE ASEAN MINISTERIAL DISCUSSIONS THE GOS SAID
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THAT SINGAPORE COULD NOT ENDORSE ANY ACTION WHICH APPEARED

TO FLOUT RESOLUTIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL. TAN SAID MOST OF THE OTHER ASEAN DELEGATIONS SUPPORTED SINGAPORE DURING THIS DISCUSSION AND THAT THIS HAD PROMPTED FOREIGN MINISTER MALIK TO MAKE A LONG DEFENSE OF INDONESIA'S ACTIONS INCLUDING STRONG ASSERTIONS THAT INDONESIA HAD ABIDED BY UNSN RESOLUTIONS. HOWEVER, WHEN IT CAME TIME TO DRAFT THE COMMUNIQUE SINGAPORE FOUND THAT THE OTHER DELEGATIONS WERE PREPARED TO GO ALONG WITH THE LANGUAGE PROPOSED BY THE GOI AND SINGAPORE HAD TO FIGHT A RATHER LONELY BATTLE TO WATER DOWN THE TEXT SO THAT IT WOULD NOT CREATE THE IMPRESSION THAT ASEAN WAS ENDORSING INDONESIA'S ACTIONS IN TIMOR. WHEN ASKED WHETHER THIS CONTENTIOUS EXERCISE HAD SERIOUSLY AFFECTED SINGAPORE/INDONESIAN RELATIONS, TAN SAID THAT MALIK AND SOME OTHER SENIOR INDONESIAN OFFICIALS UNDERSTAND SINGAPORE'S POSITION. SOME OF THE INDONESIAN MILITARY DO NOT AND ARE THEREFORE QUITE UNHAPPY WITH THE GOS OVER THIS ISSUE. HE CONCLUDED THAT THE CURRENT STATE OF INDONESIAN/SINGAPORE RELATIONS IS ABOUT HALF WAY BETWEEN "CORRECT AND WARM."

3. BIG POWER PRESENCE IN SEA. DCM REFERRED TO FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM'S RECENT SPEECH IN BANGKOK (REF A) EMPHASIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF RETAINING A PRESENCE OF ALL THE MAJOR POWERS IN THE ASEAN AREA, AND ASKED TAN IF THE OTHER ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS HAD SHARED THIS VIEW AT MANILA. TAN REPLIED THAT ALL THE ASEAN FOREIGN MINISTERS WANT TO RETAIN SOME DEGREE OF MAJOR POWER PRESENCE IN THE AREA BUT CAN NOT AGREE ON WHAT FORM IT SHOULD TAKE. THE MALAYSIANS AND THAIS WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE MAJOR POWERS MAINTAIN A POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PRESENCE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA BUT NOT A MILITARY ONE. SINGAPORE BELIEVES THAT SINCE THE WEST OPERATES LARGELY THROUGH OVERT MEANS THE U.S. POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PRESENCE ALSO REQUIRES SOME FORM OF MILITARY PRESENCE TO PROVIDE THE NECESSARY UNDERPINNING AND DETERRENT CAPABILITY TO BALANCE THE SOVIETS WHO MAY NOT HAVE BASES IN SEA BUT WHO DO WORK THROUGH SUBVERSION AND TO SOME EXTENT THROUGH THE VIETNAMESE WHO HAVE A VERY LARGE MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE AREA. THE PHILIPPINES IS ALSO ANXIOUS TO KEEP A U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE REGION, BUT ACCORDING TO TAN

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IS "OBSESSED" WITH QUESTION OF SOVEREIGNTY. HE NOTED THAT THE PHILIPPINES HAD APPLIED FOR OBSERVER STATUS IN THE NONALIGNED MOVEMENT AND GOP OFFICIALS WERE WORRIED THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO PROVIDE CONVINCING EVIDENCE OF NONALIGNED CREDENTIALS UNLESS PHILIPPINES EXERCISED SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE U.S. BASES. TAN SAID THAT THE SINGAPORE DELEGATION HAD WARNED THE PHILIPPINES THAT ONCE THEY GAINED SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE U.S. BASES THEY WOULD THEN COME

UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE NONALIGNED MOVEMENT TO "KICK THE AMERICANS OUT ALTOGETHER." THEY POINTED OUT THE GOP WOULD HAVE NO LOGICAL BASIS FOR RESISTING THIS PRESSURE ONCE SOVEREIGNTY HAD BEEN YIELDED. INDONESIA WANTED THE U.S. TO REMAIN INVOLVED IN THE REGION AND HAVE THE CAPABILITY OF COUNTERING SOVIET POWER, BUT DID NOT WISH THE U.S. PRESENCE TO BE SO OBTRUSIVE THAT IT WOULD JEOPARDIZE ITS NONALIGNED POSITION OR CAUSE INTERNAL POLITICAL DISCONTENT WITHIN THE ASEAN COUNTRIES.
HOLDRIDGE

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